

SENATE PASSES IMMIGRATION BILL

Millions will get a chance for US citizenship

AP, Washington

Senators are challenging House Republicans to give ground on their enforcement-only fix for the country's immigration problems and consider offering citizenship to millions of immigrants illegally in the US.

Senate passage of its immigration bill by a 62-36 vote on Thursday sets up a confrontation with the House, where many lawmakers equate the citizenship offer with amnesty.

President Bush said the House "began a national dialogue" when it passed an immigration bill last year

and he said he "looked forward to working together" with lawmakers to produce a bill he could sign.

An effective measure, he said in a statement, would protect US borders, make employers responsible for people they hire, create a temporary worker programme, deal with the illegal immigrants already in the US and "honour America's great tradition of the melting pot."

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said he hoped the House would see the legislation as a rare opportunity. "We should seize this moment so America can move forward," he said.

Yet House Majority Leader John

Boehner said House negotiators will oppose "troubling policies that encourage open borders and invite more illegal immigrants into our country."

"Our most important priority is to secure our borders and stop illegal immigration," said Boehner, R-Ohio. GOP Rep. Peter King of New York, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said he would vote against any legislation that included amnesty or legalisation for illegal immigrants. King is expected to be among the House negotiators.

Lawmakers on both sides expect difficult talks at reconciling the bills.

"We have a start," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt. "It is still a 50-50 proposition."

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., who voted for the Senate bill, said he would seek to have negotiations begin soon.

Republican Rep. Jeff Flake of Arizona, who sponsored an early version of the Senate bill in the House, urged House Speaker Hastert to follow Frist's lead "so we can begin the difficult task of

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Rule nisi on Rajshahi mayor, 10 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A High Court (HC) division bench issued a rule nisi against the Rajshahi mayor and 10 government officials including three secretaries for their failure to conserve Rajshahi Town Protection Dam putting the city under threat.

The bench comprising Justice Sayed Md Dastgir, and Justice Mammun Rahman on Thursday asked them to explain their failure within four weeks.

The respondents Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP, secretaries of ministries of land, water resources and environment, forest, chairman of Environment Directorate, chairman of Rajshahi Development Authority and chairman of Water Development Board (WDB), Rajshahi deputy commissioner and Rajshahi police commissioner, superintendent engineer and executive engineer of Rajshahi WDB.

The rule nisi was served following a petition filed on people's interest by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (Bela).

Rajshahi Bela chief Sayeed Ahmed Kabir Saurav said illegal occupation of the 17km dam and unabated movement of sand collecting trucks have been damaging Rajshahi Town Protection Dam.

"Not stopping the illegal occupiers and trucks is intentional," he said quoting from the petition.

Failure to rescue 3 indigenous UP men slated

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Four union parishad (UP) chairmen criticised the authorities concerned for failing to rescue the three indigenous local government members abducted at Lemuchhari in Mohalchhari upazila on May 21.

In a joint statement, the UP chairmen demanded the government rescue the abducted Mohalchhari UP chairman Archimedes Chakma, UP member Bipul Chakma and Tripal Chakma and also asked the abductors to free them.

A gang of indigenous abductors abducted Archimedes along with the other two UP members. Archimedes himself is the chief accused in an abduction case filed after Rupam Mahajan, a businessman, went missing on August 24, 2003.

A few days ago Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) leader Anil Chakma Gorki and another man in connection with the abduction. They were also accused in the case filed after three foreigners were abducted in 2003 at Bagachhari of Rangamati. The three foreigners were later rescued while Archimedes worked as a mediator.

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Make Rohingya camps liveable

UNHCR official concerned



Janet Lim

MONJUR MAHMUD

The Dhaka office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is under pressure from its headquarters in Geneva to improve the living standard in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar as overall situation has deteriorated there.

"I am concerned over some regards. The overall situation in the camps, including sanitation, health and education, has worsened," said Janet Lim, director of UNHCR Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

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Save party, do not nominate Saifur

Sylhet BNP men urge Mannan Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A number of BNP leaders of Sylhet yesterday appealed to the BNP secretary general to take immediate measures to save Sylhet BNP from ruination and not to nominate Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman for Sylhet-1 constituency.

The press statement issued from the district BNP office appealed to the BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Zia.

The leaders also condemned the Wednesday night's attack on the home of Sylhet BNP Convenor M Ilyas Ali MP and the attack on the BNP and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) men at Shyamoli Community Centre in Sylhet on Thursday afternoon.

Former Sylhet BNP general secretary Abdul Gaffar, former Sylhet BNP joint secretary Abdul Salam Bachchu, and former Sylhet BNP organising secretary Saiful Islam Babul, Vice-president of Sylhet city BNP Prof Maksud Ali, former Sylhet Jubo Dal president Kamal Ahmed, former president and general secretary of district JCD Quamrul Huda Jaigirdar and Misbahul Quadir Fahim were all signatories to the statement.

5 murdered in 4 days in Kushtia

Sharp increase in crime

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Law and order in Kushtia made a sudden nosedive this week with at least five people killed between Monday and Thursday.

An increase in criminal activities including robberies, clashes, and rapes marked the week.

People expressed their fear about the situation while law enforcers apprehend further deterioration of law and order in the district rife with activities of underground armed groups.

According to different sources including police records, at least five incidents of killings, two robberies, two clashes and a rape took place in the district this week.

On Monday morning police recovered a dead body of a 22-year old unknown man from a field of Dobail village under Mirpur upazila. The body bore marks of indiscriminate hacking. Police sent the body to Kushtia general hospital for an autopsy. They could not however identify the victim or the cause

behind the killing.

Armed robbers stabbed to death a truck helper Monday night when he tried to resist their attempt to loot the truck. He was identified as Ful Babu, 25, of Udimary in Pirojpur.

Police said armed robbers barricading the Kushtia-Bheramara highway looted at least 30 trucks and eight buses.

On the same night, Mannan Ali, 24, of Minapara under the district headquarters was slaughtered. Mannan, son of Minhaj Ali, was a mechanic.

On Tuesday, police recovered the body of Azam, 27, from a ditch at Charsadipur village under Kumarkhali upazila. The assailants took Azam to Charsadipur abducting him from Hina village under the district headquarters of Pabna on Sunday, police said.

On Wednesday night, Sahidul Islam, 35, at Nalkhola under the district headquarters was found slaughtered. Police said Sahidul,

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CCC security guard stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Criminals stabbed a security guard of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) to death at the city's Panchalaish area yesterday.

The ill fated guard, Mohammad Abul Kalam, 45, son of Abdur Rashid, hailed from Malium of Patiya upazila in the district.

Police and sources said four thieves attacked Kalam as he tried to prevent them from breaking into a shop when he was on patrol at Sholokbahar area around 4:00am.

Critically injured Kalam was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 9:00am.

Nepal opens talks with Maoists

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepalese government negotiators launched peace talks with Maoist rebel leaders yesterday confident of success in ending a deadly decade-long insurgency after clearing the way for a new constitution.

The meeting which got underway at a capital hotel is the first formal discussion between the rebels and the government since they joined forces for 19 days of street protests that last month ended King Gyanendra's total rule over the country.

"We are 100 percent hopeful that the talks will succeed," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, the interim home

minister and head of the government talks team.

Maoist rebels began their insurgency in 1996 to fight for a republic that has left them in control of large parts of Nepal's rural areas. More than 12,500 people have died.

As the price for joining the political mainstream, the Maoists have demanded elections to a new body to rewrite the 1990 constitution, which would decide the future role, if any, for the monarch.

"The talks will focus on the issue of constituent assembly elections," Sitaula confirmed before heading into the talks at a hotel in the capital Kathmandu. The Maoist team arrived a few minutes later but declined to comment to waiting

media as they went into the first session.

Gyanendra seized power in February 2005, accusing the government of corruption and failing to quell the Maoist rebellion, and cracked down on political opposition and the media.

The Maoists and a seven-party coalition, former foes, struck an agreement late last year to focus their energies against Gyanendra and force him to relinquish total control.

They brought thousands on to the streets leading to violent clashes with security forces that left 19 dead but forced the king to recall parliament and end the 14-month period of total rule.

20 hurt as BNP factions clash in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

At least 20 people, including the officer-in-charge (OC) of Shahrasti Police Station, were injured in a clash between two rival groups of the ruling BNP at Doyabhang crossing in Shahrasti upazila yesterday afternoon.

Locals said the clash between the supporters of local MP MA Matin and BNP leader Engineer Mominul Haq took place as a sequel to their previous enmity over establishing supremacy in the area.

Witnesses said the supporters of Mominul Haq, lobbying for BNP ticket to contest the coming general election, called a projection meeting near Mannan petrol pump at 2:00pm.

But the clash broke out when Matin group, equipped with lethal weapons, swooped on their rivals at the meeting venue, leaving 20 people from both sides injured.

The warring groups damaged two passing vehicles and blocked Chandpur-Cornilla highway for two hours, leaving a good number of vehicles stranded on both sides of the road.

Later, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Officer-in-Charge (OC) Quamrul Hasan of Shahrasti Police Station was injured while trying to disperse the clashing BNP activists.

Eight of the injured, including the OC, were admitted to Shahrasti Health Complex and Hajiganj Health complex.

Additional police have been deployed in the area to fend off further trouble.

Bush, Blair admit mistakes in Iraq

AP, Washington

More than three years after sending their troops to invade Iraq, President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair cannot escape questions about their decision to go to war even as they acknowledge far-reaching mistakes.

Defensive when they would prefer to celebrate the recent political success in Baghdad, the trans-Atlantic allies reflected on the price of overthrowing Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

In a joint news conference Thursday night that had a sombre tone, Bush acknowledged the

bloodshed has been difficult for the world to understand. Blair called the violence "ghastly."

But, Bush said at the White House, "Despite setbacks and missteps, I strongly believe we did and are doing the right thing."

Those missteps include the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, though Bush said those responsible have been jailed. More personally, the president said, he learned not to use so much "tough talk" saying Osama bin Laden was wanted "dead or alive" and challenging America's enemies to "bring it on."

"I learned some lessons about

expressing myself maybe in a little more sophisticated manner, you know," Bush said softly.

Blair said the leaders did not accurately predict immense challenges such as the strength of the insurgency. "It should have been very obvious to us," the prime minister said.

The press conference came after Bush and Blair had a private meeting and ended when the two left for dinner upstairs in the president's residence.

Blair was continuing his Washington visit Friday with a speech at Georgetown University

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Bomb kills 9 in Baghdad

AP, Baghdad

A powerful bomb exploded yesterday in an outdoor market in a majority Shia part of east Baghdad, killing at least nine people and wounding 30, police said, as Iraq's prime minister expressed hope two key security posts could be filled within days.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki planned to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki later Friday, a day after the Iraqi leader said he may soon be ready to name the two men who will be charged with carrying out his pledge to take over security for Iraq within 18 months.

The initial focus of the effort will be restoring order for the capital's more than 5 million residents, who have suffered the most from suicidal

killers, roadside bombs and sectarian death squads.

"It is time for those who want to steal the smiles from the Iraqi people and turn its women into mourners to be silenced," said Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zikam Ali al-Zubaie, the Sunni Arab who is filling the defence post temporarily.

A bomb planted under a car exploded at 10 a.m. in an outdoor market in the Nahda area, killing at least nine people and wounding 30, hospital security official Sgt. Sabah Muhsin said.

The explosion occurred at 10 a.m., police Lt. Ahmed Mohammed said, a time when the market, where old furniture, household goods and appliances are sold, was especially busy during the start of

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Myanmar removes barriers around Suu Kyi's home

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar police removed barbed wire barriers from around Aung San Suu Kyi's home late Friday, as the military was set to review her house arrest amid an international

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Heavy rain in Ctg, flights delayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Torrential rainfall inundated a large area of the port city yesterday while the inclement weather forced cancellation of a Chittagong-Dhaka flight and delayed three others, including two to Kolkata.

The rain that started on Thursday night came as a relief for the city dwellers in the scorching summer but most of the low-lying areas in the city submerged following yesterday's heavy downpour that started at noon and continued till around 3:30pm with an hour-long break in the middle.

The heavy rain caused many of the city streets go under knee-deep to waist-deep water, disturbing the normal life.

Met office recorded 86.20mm of rainfall in the twenty-four hours

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Most of the low-lying areas of port city Chittagong go under water following yesterday's downpour.

PHOTO: STAR

Prayer Timing		
May 27		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fair	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-43	6-47
Esha	8-05	8-35

Source: Islamic Foundation